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SUBJECT: A SLAP ON THE HAND AND A PAYMENT PLAN FOR ARRESTED EX-MINISTERS

¶1. (U) Three of the four former Ministers of Mines, Ousman Sylla, Louceny Nabe, and former Prime Minister Ahmed Tidaine Souare, who had been arrested for alleged mismanagement of government money from the Mining Fund, were released April 1st. Former Minister of Mines Ahmed Kante, who steadfastly denies any wrongdoing, remains in custody. The former ministers were detained on March 23 and held until their release in PM3, a military detention center reserved for those accused of high profile or political crimes. Sylla, Nabe and Souare were conditionally released following payment of a lump sum to the government and agreement on a repayment schedule for the remaining missing funds.

¶2. (U) CNDD President Moussa Dadis Camara and the Office for the Control of Economic and Financial Crimes reportedly conducted the fraud investigation at Camp Alpha Yaya March 6-7. On national television, Sylla, Nabe and Souare all initially denied any wrongdoing, claiming that the missing funds had been turned over to President Conte or provided to the Ministry of Mines to purchase vehicles and cover operating expenses, but they were unable to produce evidence of Conte's possession of the money.

¶3. (U) According to press reports, the three former ministers met again with Dadis on March 31 in the company of the Minister of Justice and members of the Audit Committee. The Minister of Justice reportedly informed Dadis that the former ministers were very cooperative with the investigation and had confessed their crimes. Souare said only that he would "take responsibility" for the embezzlement. On national radio Dadis called their admission of guilt a "courageous and patriotic act." Dadis told them to return home and that he was at their disposition. The Minister of Justice also stated that Kante had not shown the same good will, had not paid anything, and refused to recognize that he owes the state money. (Comment. Ironically, earlier in the month during the televised mine forum on March 19, Dadis openly praised Kante for his patriotism and honesty and defended him from accusations by the Minister of State Control who accused Kante of embezzlement. End Comment.)

¶4. (U) Embassy sources indicate that Souare is charged with embezzling 12 billion Guinean francs (USD \$2,500,000). Before his release, he made a payment of 500,000,000 Guinean francs (USD \$103,000) and agreed to pay the remaining amount in quarterly installments. Louceny Nabe and Ousmane Sylla both paid 200,000,000 Guinean francs (USD \$41,000), agreed to quarterly installments, and offered land and a home as collateral.

COMMENT

¶5. (SBU) The arrests of these senior government officials,

particularly Souare, captivated the nation as did their appearance on the late night "Dadis Show" where they were questioned by the CNDD president. Their release underscores the arbitrary nature of Dadis' justice system. There has been no mention of a trial for the former ministers; repayment of the stolen funds and assertion of power by Dadis appear to have satisfied the CNDD, at least in the near term. Furthermore, admissions of guilt and commitments to repay money earn praise and commendations of patriotism rather than condemnations for corrupt practices. At the same time, refusals to "confess" and pay up apparently mean that accused officials, such as Kante, remain in prison indefinitely and may ultimately face trial. END COMMENT.

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